

a restaurant maintenance module configured to provide the restaurant access to the restaurant's table reservation inventory, the restaurant maintenance module further comprising:

a reservation booking database having a plurality of records, the plurality of records corresponding to the plurality of time-slots for the tables at the restaurant; and

a table reservation management module configured to enable the restaurant to book time-slots in the reservation booking database to reserve tables at the restaurant for customers not making bookings over the Internet.

38. The software product of claim 37, wherein the web site module further comprises an Internet search module configured to locate the restaurant in response to a search request submitted by the Internet user to locate the restaurant among a plurality of restaurants affiliated with the web site.

Subj 101
A ~~39. The software product of claim 38, wherein the time-slot display module of the web site module further comprises a time-slot search module configured to search and display the available time-slots for tables at the restaurant's place of business during a selected time period as defined by the Internet user.~~

40. The software product of claim 39, wherein the time-slot search module is further configured to search and display the available and not-available time slot-increments for tables accommodating a specific party size as defined by the Internet user.

Subj 102
~~41. The software product of claim 37, wherein the booking module of the web site module is further configured to require the Internet user to submit personal information over the Internet for the Internet user to book one of the available time-slots to reserve the corresponding table at the restaurant's place of business.~~

42. The software product of claim 41, wherein the personal information includes at least one of the following types of information: the Internet user's name; the Internet user's email address; the Internet user's mailing address; the Internet user's phone number; the Internet user's credit card information; and the Internet user's password.


43. The software product of claim 41, wherein the booking module of the web site module is further configured to write the personal information submitted by the Internet user into the reservation booking database of the restaurant, the personal information being written into the record in the restaurant's reservation booking database corresponding to the time-slot displayed by the time-slot display module and booked by the Internet user.

Sub 13
44. ~~The software product of claim 43, wherein the web site module further comprises a confirmation module configured to generate a confirmation message over the Internet to the Internet user after the personal information has been written to the reservation booking database of the restaurant to confirm the booking of the selected time-slot.~~

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45. The software product of claim 37, wherein the web site module further comprises a reminder module configured to send a reminder message over the Internet to the Internet user of the booked time-slot for the reserved table at the restaurant's place of business a predetermined time period prior to the date of the booking.

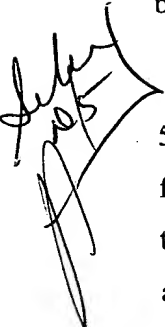
46. The software product of claim 37, wherein the Internet web site further comprises a link module configured to link to a web page associated with the restaurant.

47. The software product of claim 37, wherein the restaurant maintenance module further comprises a password module configured to accept a unique password to prevent the unauthorized access to the reservation booking database belonging to the restaurant.

 48. ~~The software product of claim 37, wherein the table reservation management module is further configured to permit the restaurant to manage a substantial portion of its time-slot inventory for table bookings made by both Internet users through the Web site module or by non-Internet users.~~

49. The software product of claim 48, wherein the table reservation management module further comprises a restaurant display module configured to permit the restaurant to display the available and the booked time-slots for the tables at the restaurant's place of business during a selected time period.

50. The software product of claim 49, wherein the restaurant display module is further configured to display the time-slot inventory of tables at the restaurant, the booked time-slots and the available time-slots during the selected time period.

 51. ~~The software product of claim 50, wherein the restaurant display module is further configured to display the time-slot inventory of tables on a computer display, the time-slot inventory being displayed along a first axis and the time increments for the availability of the tables along a second axis of the computer display.~~

52. The software product of claim 50, wherein the restaurant display module is further configured to display the restaurant's booked and available time-slots for tables at the restaurant in at least one of the following seatings at the restaurant: a dinner seating; and a lunch seating.

53. The software product of claim 50, wherein the restaurant display module is further configured to display the bookings of time-slots for tables previously booked at the restaurant by Internet users through the Web site module.

54. The software product of claim 50, wherein the restaurant display module is further configured to display the bookings of time-slots for tables previously booked for customers by the restaurant through the table reservation management module.

55. The software product of claim 50, wherein the time-slots displayed by the restaurant display module provides pointers to corresponding records among the plurality of records in the reservation booking database of the restaurant.

56. The software product of claim 55, wherein the corresponding records contains fields configured to store customer information related to the time-slot booked in the name of the customer.

57. The software product of claim 56, wherein the corresponding records include at least one of the following fields: a name field for storing the name of the customer; a mailing address field for storing the mailing address of the customer; an email address field for storing the email address of the customer; a phone number field for storing the phone number of the customer; a credit card field for storing the credit card information of the customer; and a password field for storing the password information of the customer.

58. ~~The software product of claim 55, further comprising a restaurant data entry module configured to allow the restaurant to write customer information into the record corresponding to the available time-slot to book the available time-slot in the name of the customer.~~

59. The software product of claim 55, wherein each time-slot displayed by the restaurant display module is an active link to a second data display that displays the customer information in the record corresponding to a booked time-slot when the booked time-slot is selected by the restaurant.

60. The software product of claim 59, wherein the second data display is further configured to display the customer information in the record corresponding to the booked time-slot regardless of whether the time-slot was booked over the Internet by an Internet user or by the restaurant using the table reservation management module.

61. The software product of claim 59, wherein the second data display further comprises a data entry field configured to receive data input from the restaurant indicating that the customer that booked the time-slot has arrived at the restaurant.

62. The software product of claim 48, wherein the table reservation management module further comprises a customer search module to aid the restaurant in finding one of the time-slots for a table booked in the name of a customer in the reservation booking database.

63. The software product of claim 62, wherein the customer search module performs the search using at least one of the following search criteria: date of booking; name of customer who made the booking; email address of the customer who made the booking; or telephone number of the customer who made the booking.

64. ~~The software product of claim 37 wherein the web site module further comprises a first cancellation module configured to permit the Internet user to cancel a previously booked timeslot for a table booked by the Internet user at the restaurant's place of business.~~

65. The software product of claim 37, wherein the restaurant maintenance module further comprises a second cancellation module configured to permit the restaurant to cancel a previously booked time-slot for a table at the restaurant's place of business.

66. The software module of claim 37, wherein the restaurant maintenance module further comprises a communication module configured to permit the restaurant to send communication messages to Internet users over the Internet.

Sub DA
67. ~~The software module of claim 37, wherein the restaurant maintenance module further comprises a block-out module configured to enable the restaurant to selectively block-out time-slots in the restaurant's time-slot inventory so that the blocked-out time-slots can not be booked.~~

68. The software product of claim 37, wherein the web site module is configured to reside on a central computing location coupled to the Internet.

Sub DA
69. ~~The software product of claim 68, wherein the restaurant maintenance module for the restaurant, including the reservation booking database and the table reservation management module, are configured to reside on a computer affiliated with the restaurant.~~

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70. ~~The software product of claim 69, wherein the restaurant maintenance module is further configured to write reservation updates to the restaurant's reservation booking database over the Internet to an aggregate database located at the central computing location, the aggregate database containing the reservation booking databases for a plurality of restaurants affiliated with the web site.~~

71. The software product of claim 68, wherein the restaurant maintenance module for the restaurant, including the reservation booking database database and the table reservation management module, are further configured to reside at the central computing location and are accessible by the restaurant over the Internet.

72. The software product of claim 71 further comprising an aggregate database configured to reside at the central computing location, the aggregate database including the reservation booking databases of a plurality of restaurants affiliated with the web site.

73. The software product of claim 71, wherein the restaurant maintenance module for the restaurant is further configured to write updates to the restaurant's reservation booking database over the Internet to a duplicate restaurant reservation booking database located on a computer associated with the restaurant.

74. The software product of claim 37, wherein the web site module further comprising a web page module for the restaurant, the web page module configured to post information pertaining to the restaurant available over the Internet, the information including at least one of the following: the restaurant's menu; specials offered by the restaurant; wines offered by the restaurant; and reviews of the restaurant.

75. The software product of claim 74, wherein the restaurant maintenance module further comprises an editing module configured to permit the selected restaurant to edit the restaurant's web page module.

76. The software product of claim 38, wherein the Internet search module is further configured to locate the selected restaurant based on at least one of the following search criteria: name of the selected restaurant; location of the selected restaurant; or type of cuisine offered by the selected restaurant.

77. The software product of claim 76, wherein the web site module is further configured to display the search results of the search request submitted by the Internet user, the search results including at least one of the following types of information for the restaurants meeting the search request: the names of the restaurants; the address of the restaurants; the type of cuisine offered by the restaurants; reviews of the restaurants; a price range for the restaurants and posted comments from other Internet users regarding the restaurants.

78. The software product of claim 37, further comprising a table layout display module, the table layout display module further configured to display the layout of tables at the restaurant's place of business.

79. The software product of claim 78, wherein the table layout display module is further configured to display booked tables in a first display mode and open tables in a second display mode.

Sub 1010
80. A reservation system comprising:

a central computing location configured to host a restaurant web site module configured to create an Internet web site for booking reservations at a plurality of restaurants, the web site module further comprising:

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an Internet user module including:

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an Internet search module configured to identify a selected restaurant in response to a search request submitted by an Internet user to identify the selected restaurant among a plurality of restaurants affiliated with the web site;

a time-slot display module configured to display one or more available time-slots each corresponding to one or more available tables at the selected restaurant's place of business;

a reservation booking database having a plurality of records, the plurality of records corresponding to the plurality of time-slots for the tables at the selected restaurant; and

a booking module configured to permit the Internet user to book one of the available time-slots to reserve the corresponding table.

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81. The reservation system of claim 80, wherein the central computing location is further configured to cooperate with a local computer located at the selected restaurant, the local computer at the selected restaurant including a table reservation management

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module configured to permit the selected restaurant to book time-slots in its reservation booking database to reserve tables at the selected restaurant for customers not making bookings over the Internet.

82. The reservation system of claim 81, further comprising a second reservation booking database located at the local computer, the second reservation booking database configured to be a duplicate of the first reservation booking database associated with the selected restaurant.

83. The reservation system of claim 82, further comprising an update module located at the central computing location, the upgrade module configured to update the second reservation booking database located at the local computer of the selected restaurant when the Internet user books one of the available time-slots in the reservation booking database of the selected restaurant.

84. The reservation system of claim 82, further comprising an update module located at the local computer, the upgrade module configured to update the reservation booking database located at the central computing location when the selected restaurant books one of the available time slots in the second reservation booking database of the selected restaurant.

85. The reservation system of claim 81, wherein the table reservation management module is further configured to permit the selected restaurant to manage a substantial portion of its time-slots for table bookings made by both Internet users through the Internet user module or by non-Internet users.

86. The reservation system of claim 85, wherein the table reservation management module further comprises a restaurant display module configured to permit the selected restaurant to display the available and the booked time-slots for the tables at the selected restaurant's place of business during a time period defined by the selected restaurant.

87. The reservation system of claim 86, wherein the restaurant display module is further configured to display the bookings of time-slots for tables previously booked at the selected restaurant by Internet users through the Internet user module.

88. The reservation system of claim 86, wherein the restaurant display module is further configured to display the bookings of time-slots for tables previously booked for customers by the selected restaurant through the table reservation management module.

89. The reservation system of claim 86, wherein the time-slots in the time-slot inventory displayed by the restaurant display module provides pointers to corresponding records among the plurality of records in the reservation booking database of the selected restaurant.

90. The reservation system of claim 89, wherein the corresponding record contains fields configured to store customer information related to the time-slot booked in the name of the customer.

91. The reservation system of claim 90, wherein the corresponding record includes at least one of the following fields: a name field for storing the name of the customer; a mailing address field for storing the mailing address of the customer; an email address field for storing the email address of the customer; a phone number field for storing the phone number of the customer; a credit card field for storing the credit card information of the customer; and a password field for storing the password information of the customer.

92. The reservation system of claim 90 wherein the corresponding record includes at least one of the following fields: a smoking field to indicate if the customer requires a smoking table; a special occasions field to indicate if the customer is celebrating special

occasion; and a dietary request field to indicate if the customer has a special dietary request.

93. The reservation system of claim 86, further comprising a restaurant data entry module configured to allow the selected restaurant to write customer information into the record corresponding to the selected time-slot to book the selected time-slot in the name of the customer by the selected restaurant.

94. The reservation system of claim 86, wherein each time-slot displayed by the restaurant display module is an active link to a second data display that displays the customer information in the record corresponding to a booked time-slot when the booked time-slot is selected by the restaurant.

95. The reservation system of claim 86, wherein the table reservation management module further comprises a customer search module to aid the selected restaurant in finding a booked time-slot for a table in the reservation booking database of the selected restaurant.

96. The reservation system of claim 80, wherein the Internet user module further comprises a cancellation module configured to permit the Internet user to cancel a previously booked time-slot for a table booked by the Internet user at the selected restaurant's place of business.

97. The reservation system of claim 81, further comprising a table layout display module, the table layout display module further configured to display the layout of tables at the selected restaurant's place of business.

98. The reservation system of claim 78, wherein the table layout display module is further configured to display booked tables in a first display mode and open tables in a second display mode.

99. A method comprising the steps of:

providing a first restaurant a reservation booking database having a plurality of records, the plurality of records corresponding to a plurality of time-slots for the tables at the first restaurant;

providing a restaurant table reservation management module configured to enable the first restaurant to book time-slots in the first reservation booking database to reserve tables at the first restaurant for customers not making bookings over the Internet; and

providing an Internet booking module configured to enable an Internet user to book an available one of the time-slots to reserve one of the tables at the first restaurant.

100. The method of claim 99, further comprising the steps of providing the first reservation booking database at the first restaurant.

101. The method of claim 100, further comprising the steps of providing a copy of the first reservation booking database at a central computing location and updating the copy of the first reservation booking database when the first restaurant books time-slots in the first reservation booking database to reserve tables for customers not making bookings over the Internet.


102. The method of claim 99, further comprising the steps of providing the first reservation booking database at a central computing location.

103. The method of claim 102, further comprising the steps of providing a copy of the first reservation booking database at the first restaurant and updating the copy of the first reservation booking database when Internet users book time-slots in the first reservation booking database located at the central computing location to reserve tables at the first restaurant.

104. The method of claim 102, further comprising the steps of aggregating a plurality of reservation booking databases associated with a plurality of restaurants at the central computing location.

105. The method of claim 99, further comprising the steps of maintaining a restaurant related web site, affiliating a plurality of restaurants with the web site, and providing the plurality of restaurants a plurality of the reservation booking databases and a plurality of the table reservation management modules respectively.

106. The method of claim 105, further comprising the step of providing a search module with the web site to enable the Internet user to search for the first restaurant among the plurality of restaurants affiliated with the web site.

 107. ~~The method of claim 99, wherein the step of providing the table reservation management module further comprises the step of enabling the first restaurant to manage a substantial portion of its time-slot inventory for table bookings made by Internet users or for non-Internet users by the first restaurant.~~

108. The method of claim 99, wherein the step of providing the table reservation management module further comprises the step of providing a restaurant display module configured to enable the first restaurant to display the available and the booked time-slots for the tables at the first restaurant's place of business during a time period defined by the first restaurant.

109. The method of claim 108, wherein the step of providing the restaurant display module further comprises the step of configuring the restaurant display module to display the bookings of time-slots for tables previously booked at the first restaurant by Internet users through the Internet booking module.

110. The method of claim 108, wherein the step of providing the restaurant display module further comprises the step of configuring the restaurant display module to display the bookings of time-slots for tables previously booked for customers by the first restaurant through the reservation table management module.

111. The method of claim 108, wherein the step of displaying time-slots during the time period defined by the first restaurant further comprises the step of configuring the displayed time-slots as pointers to the corresponding records among the plurality of records in the first reservation booking database.

112. The method of claim 111, further comprising the step of enabling the first restaurant to write customer information into the records corresponding to the time-slots booked by the first restaurant in the name of customers.

113. The method of claim 111, further comprising the step of enabling the Internet user to write customer information into the record corresponding to the available one of the time-slots to reserve the corresponding table at the first restaurant.

114. The method of claim 111, further comprising the step of configuring the record to be written with customer information to reserve the corresponding time slot in the name of the customer, the record including at least one of the following fields: a name field for storing the name of the customer; a mailing address field for storing the mailing address of the customer; an email address field for storing the email address of the customer; a phone number field for storing the phone number of the customer; a credit card field for storing the credit card information, of the customer; and a password field for storing the password information of the customer.

115. The method of claim 99, further comprising the step of providing a customer search module to aid the first restaurant in finding one of the time-slots booked in the name of a customer.

116. The method of claim 99, further comprising the step of providing a cancellation module configured to permit the Internet user to cancel a previously booked time-slot for a table booked by the Internet user at the first restaurant's place of business.

117. The method of claim 99, further comprising step of providing a table layout display module configured to display the layout of tables at the first restaurant's place of business.

118. The method of claim 117, wherein the step of providing the table layout display module further comprises the steps of displaying booked tables in a first display mode and open tables in a second display mode.

119. A software product comprising:

a first restaurant a reservation booking database having a plurality of records, the plurality of records corresponding to a plurality of time-slots for the tables at the first restaurant;

a restaurant table reservation management module configured to enable the first restaurant to book time-slots in the first reservation booking database to reserve tables at the first restaurant for customers not making bookings over the Internet; and

an Internet booking module configured to enable an Internet user to book an available one of the time-slots to reserve one of the tables at the first restaurant.
